

Behind the 'Official' 2nd Gunman Theory

By Armand Moss

IN THE MID-70s, because of a second wave of books and articles on the Kennedy assassination, it seemed appropriate to assign to a congressional committee the task of showing whether the allegations made by the critics of the Warren Commission could be substantiated.

The seven-man commission, appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to investigate the murder, had concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, had killed President John F. Kennedy.

The critics claimed that they had covered up the truth: that Oswald was part of a conspiracy to kill Kennedy.

Different critics alleged different conspiracies.

The second commission of inquiry, the House Select Committee on Assassinations, found that none of these allegations had any foundation. Prof. Robert Blakey, its chief counsel and staff director, was clearly convinced the Mafia was involved. During the two years the committee was in session, he worked very hard to prove this but never found anything to back up his position, and the committee did not implicate the Mafia.

Those among the new amateur detectives who are sincere and who, maybe unknowingly, are rehashing assertions proven false years ago are just wasting their time.

Few people know how the sentence "President Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy" was introduced in the report of the Select Committee.

The final draft, dated Dec. 13, 1978, stated that Oswald was the lone assassin and that there

was "insufficient evidence to find that there was a conspiracy."

But at the 11th hour before publication, mistaken acousticians told the committee that a record of the sounds at the scene of the assassination showed that four shots had been heard, one more than those fired by Oswald. If that were so, there would have had to have been a second gunman. An extra session was held on Dec. 29 in order to listen to the acousticians. The committee was impressed by ultracomplex explanations.

In spite of the opposition of some of the members, the conclusions were hurriedly changed: "Acoustic evidence establishes a high probability that two gunmen fired at the president" who "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy."

In their anxiety to get it over with, the majority of members had taken a considerable risk: Once published, the new conclusions were to be the official truth and, should the acousticians be proven wrong some day — which could, and did, happen, it would be of course impossible to publish a revised edition of the report with the correct Dec. 13 conclusions.

A dissenting member, Rep. Robert W. Edgar (D-Pa.), had requested a new acoustic study. The National Research Council's Committee on Ballistic Acoustics then found that acoustic data did not support the conclusion that there was a second gunman.

Moreover, the committee found that the impulses attributed to gunshots were recorded about one minute after the president had been shot.

That report was hardly mentioned anywhere. It went unnoticed in the United States as well as abroad.

The small article in The New York Times (May 15, 1982) giving the news, headed "New Study on Slaying of Kennedy Doubts 2nd Gunman Was Involved," ran on page 35.

The "conspiracy" is thus the official truth. This is unfortunate for those who try to establish the historical truth.



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